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Latin American Trends

Secret
137
September 24, 1975
No. 0528/75

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS
September 24, 1975

[redacted] NR

Argentina: Minister With Two Portfolios 15

[redacted] NR

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

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Argentina: Minister With Two Portfolios

Angel Robledo, who currently is both foreign minister and minister of interior, has become one of the key political figures in Argentina.

Robledo is a moderate Peronist who first attained national prominence as minister of defense, a post he handled with distinction from May 1973 to August 1974, when he resigned following a dispute with the then powerful secretary of the president and social welfare minister, Jose Lopez Rega. During his term Robledo quickly earned the respect of the military high command, although he had no previous experience in national security affairs. He then served as ambassador in Mexico and briefly in Brazil before he was named foreign minister on August 11, 1975.

Since his return to the cabinet, Robledo has sought to strengthen relations with other members of the political coalition that returned the Peronists to power, and with major opposition groups in Congress. His background as proven opponent of Lopez Rega and his close ties to provisional Senate President Italo Luder--according to one embassy source they have been friends since student days--have undoubtedly served him well.

Following President Peron's departure for a month's vacation on September 14, Acting President Luder peremptorily named Robledo to replace Vicente Damasco as minister of interior when the retired army colonel resigned after an argument with Luder on September 15. Robledo will eventually have to give up the Foreign Ministry to devote full attention to his duties as interior minister, which include conducting national elections and suppressing terrorism.

September 24, 1975

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

At this point Robledo appears to be an astute tactician content to cooperate with Acting President Luder; he has not indicated that he has presidential aspirations. His position, however, could make him de facto "prime minister" if President Peron returns to office. (CONFIDENTIAL)

September 24, 1975

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028

Page Denied

Approved for Release: 2018/10/29 C02693028